

# National Cave & Karst Research Institute



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## **Press Release**

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## **WORKSHOP BRINGS DIVERSE CAVE COMMUNITY TOGETHER ON FUTURE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTE**

**Carlsbad, New Mexico**--The National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI) recently hosted a workshop to develop a broad vision for the newly formed Institute. Feedback from a wide range of stakeholders was solicited to help NCKRI move forward through its initial development. Coming from as far away as California and Florida, the more than 25 attendees represented the caving community, the academic world and government agencies charged with cave and karst management.

"It was important to have this diverse group sit down at the same table and tell us what they want the Institute to become," said Louise D. Hose, the Institute's Director. "Their views on the Institute's role in cave/karst research and education, its organizational structure and management, as well as its ability to serve as an informational clearing house are critical to increase the understanding and investment of all parties involved."

The National Cave and Karst Research Institute was created to further the research, education, and wise management of cave/karst lands throughout the United States and around the world. While a working group composed of cave and karst experts from various federal agencies had provided organizational groundwork, this workshop was the first opportunity for the broader community to be fully involved. The workshop was designed to begin consultation with all the key organizations and integration of their ideas in the Institute's development and operational plans.

The two-day workshop, sponsored by the National Park Service and New Mexico Tech, was held at a federal training center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and attracted high ranking participants including Dr. Mike Soukup, the National Park Service's Associate Director for Natural Resource Stewardship and Science. Dr. Soukup noted that the Institute had "an important role to play in education, research, resource management, and information integration." He suggested that it would require a "lightweight and flexible" organization involving people from the academic community and private organizations, as well as government.

**(More)**

*If you have questions or comments regarding the institute, please e-mail them to [nckri-mail@cemrc.org](mailto:nckri-mail@cemrc.org).  
For more information on the National Cave Karst Institute go to [WWW2.nature.nps.gov/nckri](http://WWW2.nature.nps.gov/nckri).*

## National Cave Karst Research Institute-Page 2 of 2

Jack Hess, the Executive Director of the Geological Society of America stated, “NCKRI’s future lies in their ability to integrate all that they heard at the workshop and craft a mission, vision and goals and an organizational structure that gives them the flexibility that they need.” From his viewpoint, Hess said he sees “a number of areas where The Geological Society of America can work with NCKRI to enhance our respective missions.”

Dave Shaver, Chief of the NPS Geologic Resources Division, felt that the workshop was a major step forward in the development of the Institute. He pointed out that, “most of the key organizations that will be critical to NCKRI’s success now have a common understanding and a general consensus on the goals and future direction for the Institute. Now we can move forward together to make this vision a reality.”

Director Hose cited several key suggestions from the group, including the development of a board of directors or governing council and the idea that the Institute should be an umbrella structure that could put forth major grant and project proposals. Another proposal involved the perceived need for a non-profit element that could accept grants and serve as an independent entity, not aligned with any particular government agency or university.

The 1998 Act of Congress that created the Institute placed it under the auspices the National Park Service. That legislation directed the NPS to “jointly administer” the Institute with another “public or private (entity)...as determined by the Secretary” of the Interior. While no formal agreement has yet been reached, the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in Socorro, New Mexico, has expressed interest in that role. Tech, along with the City of Carlsbad, New Mexico and the National Park Service, is already one of the Institute’s three primary partners.

“All the participants were extremely engaged and positive,” reported Director Hose. “Their efforts exceeded my expectations and I feel we can now take the Institute to the next step, where we begin to implement these ideas.” A formal report that will document the details of the workshop is anticipated in the near future.

Over the next two years the Institute will further refine and initiate its operational model and develop a long-term strategic plan. New Mexico Tech will fill a Visiting Chief Scientist position in the next six months that will provide science coordination, leadership and scientific direction for the Institute. Hose will also continue to meet and work with the broader community of stakeholders that seek to be a part of the Institute.

The City of Carlsbad, the State of New Mexico, and the NPS have provided the seed money and funding for a building that will serve as visitor center, laboratory, library and offices for the Institute. Design work for the approximately \$4.5 million facility is underway with groundbreaking planned for the late 2004.

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